

The **Berean Searchlight**

Studying God's Word, Rightly Divided

November 2007



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The **Purpose** of the *Berean Bible Society* is to help you understand and enjoy the Bible. The **Mission** of BBS is to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ by proclaiming the whole counsel of God according to the revelation of the Mystery. Our **Goals** are to evangelize the lost, to educate the saved in “rightly dividing the Word of truth” (II Tim. 2:15), to energize their Christian lives, and to encourage the local church.

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From the Editor to You:



Dearly Beloved,

Our staff at the *Berean Bible Society* is like a family, each member playing an important role. So when we were looking for a Business Manager in the spring of 2002, Brother Doug Cox was a perfect fit. Doug has been actively involved in the Lord's work since he was a young man. He served as the Director of *Northern Grace Youth Camp* for many years and also worked in Christian radio. Doug accepted the position with us here at BBS with the understanding that he would give us a six-year commitment. That time is coming to an end, therefore, he recently informed us that he will be retiring early next year.

Doug has completely reorganized our business office making it far more efficient. He made so many cuts in our budget that those who supply us goods and services feared to hear from him thinking he had found someone else who would charge us less for the same service. Doug has literally saved us thousands of dollars over the years, which enabled us to use these funds to purchase additional literature. About two years ago, in cooperation with our CPA, Doug converted our archaic accounting programs into a corporate edition of QuickBooks. Needless to say, this has been a major improvement in streamlining things.



Doug and Sonja Cox

With the new year just around the corner, we are going to have to fill Doug's position as soon as possible. If you are a Grace Believer, have strong administrative skills, love accounting procedures, and enjoy working with the Lord's people, we would like to hear from you. Please send your *resume*, with references, including one from a Grace Pastor, to the *Berean Bible Society*—**ATTENTION: Pastor Sadler!** This is a full-time position (40 hrs. per week) with some benefits. We often share with our staff that they should look at their position at BBS not so much as being an employee, but as a ministry for the Lord.

We would like to personally thank Doug for his many years of faithful service. Only eternity will bear out the fruits of his labor. As Doug and his dear wife, Sonja, begin a new chapter of life together, we "commend you to God, and to the Word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified."

Yours in His redeeming love,
Paul M. Sadler, President



A Thanksgiving Tradition

By Paul M. Sadler

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Of all the holidays we Americans celebrate *Thanksgiving* is by far the most meaningful. I am sure it holds a very special place in virtually every heart. While every day should be a day of thankfulness, this particular season causes us to pause *together* to express our gratitude for having been so richly favored with the loving kindness of God.

Our forefathers understood the importance of this when they left the security of the Old World to journey to a new land that was free of religious persecution. Upon their arrival, after attending to the basic necessities of life, they promptly set a day aside to *thank* our Heavenly Father for His goodness and mercy. Although much has been made of the celebration of the Pilgrim's first *Thanksgiving*, and justifiably so, their second year in America brought its own hardships. So much so that it served to reinforce their firm belief in the providence of God.

Shortly after they planted their crops the following year, a dry spell swept across New England, which eventually turned into a drought by the end of summer. As the harvest approached the entire crop was in danger of being lost. If this would happen it was doubtful they could survive through the winter. Edward Winslow recorded in his journal how they gathered in prayer seeking divine intervention:

“When we assembled together, the heavens were as clear and the drought as like to continue as it ever was, yet (our exercise continuing some eight or nine hours) before our departure, the weather was overcast, the clouds gathered on all sides. On the next morning distilled such soft, sweet and moderate showers of rain, continuing some fourteen days! And mixed with such seasonable weather, as it was hard to say whether our withered corn or drooping affections were most quickened or revived, such was the bounty and goodness of our God!”

The Indians shared with the Pilgrims that their elders could not remember a time when a drought was so severe. Apparently, how the rain came and its duration had a profound effect on the Indians. Winslow comments on their reaction: “And all of them admired the goodness of our God towards us, that wrought so great a change in so short a time.”

As they gathered to observe the *second* Thanksgiving, at each plate there was placed *five* kernels of corn “lest anyone should forget.” This *Thanksgiving* may we remember and remember well all the bountiful blessings God has graced us with, “lest we forget.”

PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS

Philippians 3:10-14

By Paul M. Sadler

HELPING A FRIEND IN NEED

Some time ago, I received a letter from one of our readers who had shared our writings with his brother. Regrettably, his brother was not receptive to Paul's apostleship and message; consequently, he was looking for some assistance as to how to present a defense of Paul's apostleship. The brother of our friend writes:

"If you recall, Jesus named the apostles by name, and for a reason. Those were His disciples whom He trusted to spread the truth. They were the ones who got firsthand knowledge from Him. There have been a lot of people that try to walk in the right path, but because they self-proclaim themselves to be an apostle and do good works does not make them so.

"There is a big question with Paul simply because he was not named by Jesus, and second, if you look at all his writings, he uses the pronoun 'I' habitually.

Look in the first chapter of Galatians and count the 'I's'. That many 'I's' seems like he has too big of an ego. You probably won't like this because you put your faith in the teaching of Paul, but it is what I believe. There have been other books that have been written about Paul, even one that described him as having suffered from a mental disorder from all the murders he committed....

"Again, I will say that I do not disagree with Paul, but more so put my faith in the teachings of Jesus, and His apostles—this I can trust!"

We have found over the years that those who can't answer the message often resort to attacking the messenger. Our friend's brother levels three serious charges against Paul. One, the Lord never named Paul by name and therefore, he was merely a self-proclaimed apostle. Two, Paul thought far too highly of himself and was an egomaniac. Three, the

teachings of Jesus and the twelve during Christ's earthly ministry carry far more weight than Paul's writings.

As to the first charge, the Lord did indeed name Paul by name. "And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome" (Acts 23:11). More importantly, Paul was not a self-appointed apostle, but was called by the Lord to be the apostle of the Gentiles. "Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, **but by Jesus Christ**, and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead)" (Gal. 1:1 cf. Rom. 1:1; 11:13).

As to the second charge, Moses, who was God's spokesman under the Law, referred to himself by proper name around six hundred times and by personal pronoun several thousand times. Moses said to his countrymen again and again, "I command you," "I teach you," "I taught you," etc. When Israel disobeyed the words of Moses, they essentially disobeyed God. The same applies to the ministry of the Apostle Paul, in that he is God's divinely ordained spokesman for the Church, the Body of Christ. So it should not surprise us that the apostle makes reference to himself thirty times by name and by personal pronoun several hundred times. When it came to Paul's apostolic office and authority he spoke without apology, but he *humbly* acknowledged he was "less than the least of all saints" (Eph. 3:8).

As to the third charge, we simply have a failure on the part of

our friend's brother to acknowledge the Word, rightly divided. Christ spoke *again* from heaven to deliver to the Apostle Paul a new revelation concerning His heavenly ministry to the Church, which is His Body. Both the earthly and heavenly ministries of Christ are of equal importance, but they are not one and the same. Paul is the great revelator of *grace*; therefore, he instructs the members of the Body of Christ: "If any man think himself to be...spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that **I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord**" (I Cor. 14:37).

"Both the earthly and heavenly ministries of Christ are of equal importance...."

Every believer in Christ longs to know the will of God that he might walk worthy of his calling. The beginning of the end of our search is when we acknowledge Paul's apostleship and message. We are to follow Paul as he followed Christ (I Cor. 11:1). In the present administration of grace, he is our teacher, our counselor, and our example. When we pattern our Christian life after Paul we are fulfilling the commands of Christ in His *heavenly ministry* to the Church. The late president of Princeton University, Dr. Francis Patton, wrote: "The only hope of Christianity is in the rehabilitating of the Pauline theology." He

went on to add, it is either back to Christ, and His redeeming blood, “or it is on, on, on to atheism and despair.”

THE OBJECT OF PAUL’S FAITH

“That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death.” —Phil. 3:10

Christ was the object of Paul’s faith. It was his heart’s desire, as he says, “that I may know Him.” Of course, Paul is not speaking about having a desire to be converted. We know he was saved by the grace of God thirty years earlier on the road to Damascus. Rather, he desired to have a more intimate knowledge of Christ, an *experiential* knowledge. If we are following Paul, as we are instructed by the Lord to do, this should be our desire as well. It is one thing to understand that we have been crucified with Christ, but it is an entirely different matter to apply this to our daily life, *experientially*, so we no longer allow sin to reign in our mortal bodies, obeying its lust (Rom. 6:6,12).

Paul did not know Christ after the flesh, nor do we. Interestingly, the apostle never deals with the annunciation of the Savior’s coming, His birth, His childhood, or the life of Christ in any detail. Paul begins with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ in his epistles, explaining their significance for the very first time (I Tim. 2:5-7). Bound up in this wonderful truth is our *identification* with Christ’s finished work, the theme of which is developed in Romans

chapter six. It is here that the apostle desired to have a deeper understanding of the love of Christ and what He accomplished on his behalf.

Paul also wanted to experience more fully the “power of His resurrection.” When we search the Old Testament Scriptures there are two primary events where we witness a demonstration of God’s almighty power in time past. In the beginning God merely *spoke* and worlds came into being, both visible and invisible (Psa. 33:6 cf. Rom. 1:20). As we move down the corridor of time, the next great display of His divine power was the parting of the Red Sea. This particular event is appealed to frequently in the prophetic Scriptures as a practical outworking of God’s almighty power, which provided deliverance for His people from the machinery of death.

In Paul’s epistles, the apostle always directs our attention to the resurrection of Christ from the dead as a demonstration of God’s power. The day Christ died Satan was sure he was victorious, simply because he controlled the power of death (Heb. 2:14). Satan barred the way, which every burial site up to that point in time confirmed. In the Old Testament this is illustrated in the life of Samson who was a type of Christ, in spite of his shortcomings and failures (Heb. 11:32).

“And it was told the Gazites, saying, Samson is come hither. And they compassed him in, and laid wait for him all night in the gate of the city, and were quiet all the night, saying, In the morning, when it is day, we shall kill him.

And Samson lay till midnight, and arose at midnight, and took the doors of the gate of the city, and the two posts, and went away with them, bar and all, and put them upon his shoulders, and carried them up to the top of an hill that is before Hebron” (Judges 16:2,3).

The Gazites had Samson right where they wanted him. He was surrounded and they had securely locked the gate of the city. The icy chill of death was lying in wait for Samson! It looked hopeless! But about midnight Samson *arose* from his slumber and took the doors of the Iron Gate that barred the way and carried them away, defeating the purpose of his enemies. In like fashion, Christ destroyed the power of death, tearing it from its moorings and rose victoriously over it. As Charles Wesley beautifully states in the hymn, *O for a Thousand Tongues*: “He breaks the power of cancelled sin, He sets the prisoner free.”

This same power is at our disposal—not to heal the sick or to perform miracles, but to more effectively live the Christian life. When you trusted Christ as your personal Savior you experienced the power of His resurrection. You *knew* the burden of your sins was lifted and that for the first time in your life you were right with God. Your life was transformed in a moment of time!

But the good news doesn’t end there; we are to make a *present* application of this truth in our daily lives. We are unable to live the Christian life in our own strength, but thankfully the power of His resurrection will help us to yield



ourselves to God, as those that are alive from the dead, and to yield our members as instruments of righteousness unto God (Rom. 6:13). You see, sin no longer has to control us; it only will as we allow it to do so. We are dead to sin, but alive unto God!

Ultimately, we will experience the “power of His resurrection” in its fullest sense when we receive our glorified resurrected body. In God’s appointed time, the trump is going to sound and the dead in Christ shall *rise* first, and we who are alive and remain will be *transformed* in a moment of a twinkling of an eye. That’s power!

Not only did Paul want to know Christ in a more intimate way, and experience the power of His resurrection, he also desired to be identified with the *fellowship of His sufferings*. Beloved, it is human nature to want to be accepted. But if you’re a believer the world will always look at you with contempt. With this in mind,

Paul chose to take his lot with the Lord Jesus that he might understand more fully the “fellowship of His sufferings.” Paul wrote to the saints at Colosse along these same lines:

“Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His Body’s sake, which is the Church” (Col. 1:24).

The apostle isn’t referring to the sufferings of Christ that He endured at Calvary, for only the Savior could pay the penalty of our sins. Instead, he is speaking of the sufferings of Christ that He endured because He exposed men to the righteousness of God. The world hated Christ without a cause and the same will be true of us if we stand for the truth. Therefore, we are to bear that which still remains of the *rejection* of Christ; we then experience, at least in a limited degree, what He experienced to the glory of God. It is in this way that we fellowship with our Lord in His sufferings.

While Paul knew there was a very real possibility he may suffer martyrdom, when he says that he desired to be “made conformable unto His death” it has the idea of dying to self. You will recall in an earlier lesson how the Lord in a *selfless* act emptied Himself of the outward manifestation of His attributes and glory to fulfill the will of His Father. This in no wise compromised His deity in any sense of the word. Thus it was Paul’s desire, and it should be ours as well, to die to self that he might always be in the center of God’s will (Gal. 2:20).

WHICH RESURRECTION?

“If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead” (Phil. 3:11).

This particular passage has so many interpretations that one barely knows where to begin. The problem that we found with most of the more popular ones is they exclude the context. Of course, a passage without a context is a pretext. Perhaps the most generally accepted interpretation is that Paul was seeking a better resurrection at the Rapture. Although this is plausible, and worth your consideration, we believe it falls short of the meaning Paul originally intended.

If we consider the passages preceding this verse and those that follow thereafter, the context is Paul’s desire to have an *experiential* knowledge of Christ. Keeping this in mind, we must then interpret what the apostle says in verse 11 in view of its setting.

Paul’s statement, “If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead,” was not an expression of doubt, as it has been noted, but one of *humility*. He wanted to humbly attain to this particular resurrection. Since the apostle uses the definite article (the) he is making reference to a *specific* resurrection, which we believe only pertains to the Body of Christ. He then uses a triple compound Greek word *exanastasis*, which literally means *to stand up out from*.¹ This word is exclusively used by Paul and only appears in this passage. The last phrase, *of the dead* in the original has the idea of *out from among the death*. So then, when

we tie all of this together we have the following:

“If by any means, I might arrive unto the out-resurrection out from among the dead.”

We believe the *out-resurrection* is a reference to our spiritual resurrection in Christ, specifically in its practical application. When we follow the theme Paul has been developing of his identification with Christ, not only was he crucified with Christ, but he had also been *raised* with Him to walk in newness of life. As the apostle sought to apply this wonderful truth *experientially*, he wanted his resurrected life to *stand out* among those who were spiritually dead in the world so they might be drawn to Christ through his godly example. As Paul strove to attain his goal he had learned the importance of setting his affections on things above.

“If ye then be risen [past tense] with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth” (Col. 3:1,2).

“...are we living up to our full potential?”

We are to “seek” those things which are above, that is, seek out the spiritual blessings we enjoy in Christ and appropriate them by faith. We should then “set” our affections on things above by learning everything there is to learn

about them and meditate on them daily. If we turn our eyes upon Jesus and look full in His wonderful face, as the hymn writer instructs us, then “the things of earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace.”²

“Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:12).

Paul humbly acknowledges here that he had not attained to fully walking in the newness of life, as much as he desired to do so. This is a remarkable statement when you stop and think about it. Paul had been saved for over thirty years, he had spoken to the Lord face to face when he received his special revelation, and he had been caught up to the third heaven “and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter” (II Cor. 12:4). If Paul felt he still had a long way to go, we shudder to think how far we have to go to simply arrive at the point he was when he made this statement.

The apostle adds, “either were already perfect.” While we are perfect in Christ, neither Paul nor we will attain to a state of perfection on this side of glory, but this should be a goal in our life. This is what Paul means when he goes on to say “but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.” The term “apprehend” has the idea to “seize.” Paul was desirous to *seize* every thing the Lord had for him to accomplish in his life to the praise of His glory.

He sought to live up to every expectation that Christ had for him. As long as there was an ounce of strength left in him he wanted to fulfill his God-given responsibility as the apostle of the Gentiles to make Christ known according to the revelation of the Mystery.

This naturally raises the question, are we living up to our full potential? Have we made full proof of our ministry? The need for men to be saved today is as great as it was in Paul's day. The need for the Lord's people to see that God is doing something new and different among the Gentiles is even greater today than it was in Paul's time. Chaos reigns in the Church today, due to a failure to rightly divide the Word of truth! We have the answer to this confusion, but we, like Paul, must seize the opportunity to faithfully make known the gospel of the grace of God. May God help us when we are ushered into His glorious presence that we are not standing before the Lord with more *regrets* than accomplishments.

“Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:13,14).

Although Paul had not yet attained to his goal he did understand the importance of *forgetting* those things that were behind and pressing toward the mark. Paul wisely didn't dwell on past accomplishments. He understood that to do so would only serve to

hinder his enthusiasm for what yet needed to be accomplished for the Lord. If you find yourself always reminiscing about the glory days you are probably not serving the Lord in the fullest capacity. Sadly the Church today is plagued with circular reasoning. Those who are older in the faith reason that they've done their part—it's time the younger generation becomes more involved. Of course, the younger generation assumes the older generation is doing the work. Actually both need to be working in tandem. The older saints provide wisdom and stability in the Lord's service while those who are younger in years are able to put feet to what needs to be accomplished.

The apostle also didn't allow past failures and offenses to weigh him down, as we are often prone to do. We must learn from our failures and never permit those who purposely offend us to cause us to stoop to their level. We do well to follow Paul's example as he refused to be distracted by those who hindered the work and personally attacked him. Here's how Paul dealt with this matter: “Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works: Of whom be thou ware also; for he hath greatly withstood our words” (II Tim. 4:14,15).

To Be Continued!



Endnotes

1. *A Commentary of Philipppians & Titus* by Ernest R. Campbell, pgs. 110,111.
2. *Great Hymns of the Faith, Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus* by Helen H. Lemmel, pg. 204.

Question Box

“Would you be familiar with Old Testament verses that regard proselytes as having the same rights as Jews?”

“One law shall be to him that is homeborn, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among you” (Exodus 12:49).

“Ye shall have one manner of law, as well for the stranger, as for one of your own country...” (Leviticus 24:22).

“...ye shall have one ordinance, both for the stranger, and for him that was born in the land” (Numbers 9:14).

“...as ye are, so shall the stranger be before the Lord. One law and one manner shall be for you, and for the stranger.... Ye shall have one law for him that sinneth through ignorance, both for him that is born among the children of Israel, and for the stranger” (Numbers 15:15,16,29).

—Pastor Kurth



Grace Singles Conference

Dates: December 28-31, 2007

Location: *Camp Idrahaje*
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Speakers:

John Fredericksen, Justin Lynn
Andy Kern, Kevin Dickey

Theme: *Life, Love, and Other Mysteries*

The conference is for post-high school singles. For additional information, please contact: Pastor Justin Lynn at (303) 663-1026, or at PastorJustin@Q.com.

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Our Great Commission Still in Force

By C. R. Stam

OUR
GREAT
COMMISSION



What is it?

A RULE TO REMEMBER

For many years the Rule Book of the *Union Pacific Railroad* contained—and possibly it still does—the following important directive:

“Unless otherwise provided, train orders once in effect continue so until fulfilled, superseded or annulled.”

This directive can be found, in essence, not only in the rule books of other railroads, but in the manuals of the various branches of our armed forces. This must be so, for where there is no discipline there is confusion.

This is particularly true where God's instructions to His people are concerned. These too remain in force until fulfilled, superseded or annulled, and the curse of confusion inevitably results when this divine rule is violated.

This brings us to the question: What *are* God's instructions for the fulfillment of His purposes *in our day*?

As we have seen, the great majority of professing Christians

hold that our Lord's last orders, and those which we are to carry out today, are to be found in His commission to the eleven before His ascension to heaven. By almost common consent this commission has been called “the great commission.” We, however, dissent from this view and maintain that it is this mistake which lies at the root of the confusion and division which have gripped the Church in our day.

Those who teach that we should labor under this commission do not themselves *obey* it. *They do not teach their hearers to observe all that our Lord commanded during His earthly ministry. They do not sell their possessions and distribute the proceeds to the poor. They do not send their missionaries out without provision. They do not attend synagogues on the Sabbath day or offer the sacrifices of the ceremonial law.* Comparatively few of them require water baptism for salvation or hold that miraculous signs are the evidences of salvation. And surely, outside

of the Church of Rome, few claim to remit sins.

But the twelve apostles and the “little flock” of Messiah’s followers *did begin* to carry out this commission as we’ve seen. They *did* sell their belongings and distribute to the needy. They *did* go forth without material provisions, so that Peter, their leader, could say, “Silver and gold have I *NONE*.” They practically lived in the temple and strictly observed the ceremonial law. They required repentance *and* water baptism for the remission of sins, and miraculous signs *did* follow those who believed. Read the early chapters of Acts and observe how meticulously they obeyed their “great commission.”

But Israel would not heed their message or accept Jesus as Messiah, so the apostles were unable to fulfil their commission or to make disciples of all nations. Since Israel refused to accept Christ, therefore, this “great commission” was brought to a standstill. It could not, for the present, be fulfilled. This is not to imply that it has been annulled, for in Matthew 24:14 we read concerning a future day:

“And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.”

But while the commission to the eleven has neither been fulfilled nor annulled, we have demonstrated from the Scriptures that for this present dispensation it has been *superseded* by the issuing of *other* orders, those which our glorified Lord committed by

revelation to that *other* apostle, *Paul*.

Our Great Commission Neither Fulfilled Nor Superseded Nor Annulled

In Galatians 1:11,12 the Apostle Paul uses phraseology that is typical of his epistles. He uses the phrase, “*the gospel which was preached of [by] me,*” and explains why, saying:

“But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man.

“For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

To the twelve had been committed the preaching of Jesus Christ *according to covenant and prophecy*, while Paul was later sent forth to proclaim “the preaching of Jesus Christ *according to the revelation of the mystery,*” which had been “*kept secret since the world began.*” This message he calls “*my gospel,*” to distinguish it from that which the twelve had previously been preaching (See Rom. 16:25).

Both Peter and Paul referred to the crucifixion in their preaching, but whereas Peter *charged* his hearers with the crucifixion of Christ and called upon them to repent of this evil deed, Paul proclaimed the *glad news* that Christ’s death was *our* death, the complete payment for our sins—sins that would have banished us forever from the presence of God. Both proclaimed the resurrection, but Peter *warned* men that God had raised Christ from the dead to sit on the throne of David, Israel’s

rebellion notwithstanding, while Paul associated it with our justification and our resurrection to “newness of life.” This is why Paul exhorts Timothy:

“Consider what I say, and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.

“Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel” (II Tim. 2:7,8).

Again, both Peter and Paul referred to the ascension, but Peter *warned* those who had participated in the crucifixion of Christ that He had ascended to the Father’s right hand *until His enemies should be made His footstool* (Acts 2:35) while Paul declared that He was seated in heaven in the satisfaction of an accomplished redemption and as Head of the Body, the Church of today.

So, both Peter and Paul preached *Christ*, for “*other foundation can no man lay,*” but what a glorious advance Paul’s message was over that which Peter and the eleven had proclaimed at Pentecost! And thus the so-called “great commission” has been superseded by another and greater commission entrusted to Paul and to us.

Since this greatest of all commissions has never been *fulfilled, nor superseded, nor annulled,* it remains in force today and we are responsible before God to obey it.

THE NECESSARY EQUIPMENT

Light and Power to Fulfill our Commission

We have seen that the twelve apostles did not understand the

prophetic program, indeed, that it was “hid from them” (Luke 9:45; 18:34), until our Lord, at a given moment “opened...their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures” (Luke 24:45). We have seen too that at a given moment, “when the day of Pentecost was fully come,” God fulfilled a long-standing promise and the apostles and disciples “were all filled with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:1,4).

This, however, is not how believers today are enlightened and empowered to proclaim “the mystery” since revealed through Paul. God does not at some given time miraculously open our eyes to understand the Scriptures. Rather the understanding of the Word comes through diligent, prayerful study, and with a fuller understanding comes the needed power.¹



Thus the apostle prayed for himself and for all saints, that they might be given the grace to understand and might thus be empowered to proclaim the glorious message committed to him. Let us note this briefly in three of his prayers for the enduement of believers with spiritual understanding and power.

Ephesians 3:14-19: “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

“Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.

“That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be *strengthened with might* by His Spirit, in the inner man;

“That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,

“May be *able to comprehend* with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;

“And to *know the love of Christ*, which passeth knowledge, *that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.*”

Colossians 1:9-11: “For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire *that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding*;

“That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and *increasing in the knowledge of God*;

“*Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.*”

This power, rather than the power to work miracles, is doubtless what Paul refers to in I Thessalonians 1:5:

“**For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance.**”

Further on in Colossians 1, where the apostle declares that God would have His saints know “what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles” (1:27), he continues:

Colossians 1:28-2:3: “Whom we preach, *warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:*

“Whereunto I also labor, striving according to His working, which worketh in me mightily.

“For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh;

“That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of *the full assurance of understanding*, to the acknowledgment [Gr., epignosis, “full knowledge”] of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ;

“**In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.**”

How different are these prayers from the prayers most frequently offered for babes in Christ! The apostle knew, and was inspired to write to the saints, that spiritual power comes from spiritual *understanding*; that only as we are “filled with *the knowledge of His will*” can we “walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being *fruitful* in every good work...*strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power*” (Col. 1:9-11).

The Church has dismally failed to grasp the significance of this great passage. It is constantly interpreted to mean that we should know God’s will *for our lives*. Sincere young people are taught to ask God to show them: “Should I be a missionary in Africa, Asia, Europe? Or, should I be a pastor or Christian worker in a church at home? Or, perhaps, does He want me to go into business and

help provide the needs for the Lord's work?"

This may all have its place, but *not* the *first* place, and it is *not* what the above passages refer to. We say with deep earnestness to those who have thus misunderstood its meaning: whether you go to Africa, Asia, or Europe, or whether you remain at home as a pastor, Christian worker or businessman, will make little difference if you do not know "*HIS WILL*," i.e., *what He is doing and what He wants done in this dispensation of grace*. Acquire this knowledge, and you may be sure that He will graciously lead you as to His will for your life. To know "His will," you must pray for "all wisdom and spiritual understanding," so as to understand His Word to us. Thus alone will you be "strengthened with all might, by His Spirit, in the inner man." And to prayer must be added diligent Bible study, for this spiritual understanding is not granted by some miraculous demonstration in response to prayer alone. It is rather the result of prayerful, painstaking obedience to II Timothy 2:15:

"Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth


not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth."

As we sincerely obey this command we will come to enjoy one of the most precious blessings of the Christian life: "*the full assurance of understanding*"!

In Hebrews 10:22 we read of "*the full assurance of faith*." Precious possession!

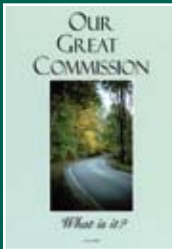
In Hebrews 6:11 the apostle writes of "*the full assurance of hope*."² This is even more blessed to experience.

But in Colossians 2:2 we learn of the apostle's longing that the saints might enjoy "*the full assurance of understanding*." This is the most blessed of all, for by it we are enabled and emboldened to proclaim His Word in "*the power of the Spirit*."

How can we sincerely read these three prayers of the Apostle Paul without earnestly longing for this assurance and the boldness that goes with it, that we might indeed be "*fruitful in every good work*"! 

Endnote

1. Graphic: www.designpics.com
2. "Which hope we have as an anchor to the soul, both sure and steadfast" (Heb. 6:19).



If you are enjoying these excerpts
from Pastor Stam's book

"Our Great Commission"

you can order a copy by writing to: Berean Bible Society, PO Box 756, Germantown, WI 53022, or visiting: www.bereanbiblesociety.org, or calling: (262) 255-4750.

Use Your IRA to Make a Tax-Free Gift

By Doug Cox



This is just a humble reminder of some exciting news that can help you plan a tax-effective strategy for your IRA distributions in 2007 while you support your favorite charity. *Time is of the essence.* For the tax year of 2007, taxpayers over the age of 70½ may donate up to \$100,000 from an IRA to a nonprofit organization without having the distribution count as taxable income on their federal income tax return.

The Pension Protection Act of 2006 provided a one-step option to make a charitable contribution directly from your IRA to a nonprofit organization in 2007 with no tax consequences in most states. Many nonprofit organizations can accept such gifts *including the Berean Bible Society*. Some states, like Wisconsin, do not follow this federal tax provision. Therefore, on the Wisconsin tax return, taxpayers must report the withdrawal from their IRA as income and the charitable contribution as an itemized deduction.

If the charitable contribution exceeds 30 percent of the taxpayer's modified adjusted gross income, the excess cannot be deducted in the year of the contribution but can be carried over to the next five tax years. The carry-over can be deducted in those years subject to the 30 percent of modified adjusted gross income limit.

And there's more good news: Your IRA charitable distribution will satisfy all or part of your required minimum IRA distribution for 2007. You can use your IRA to make your charitable gifts and avoid tax on your required IRA distribution.

Here are some restrictions that apply. You must be 70½ years of age. Tax benefits apply for gifts up to \$100,000 per person in 2007. You can make these IRA charitable distributions in 2007 only. You must instruct your IRA account administrator to make the distribution directly to the charity or nonprofit. Only outright charitable gifts can be made (not life-income gifts such as charitable gift annuities). And, your gift must be made to a public charity (not to donor-advised funds or private foundations).

How do you make a tax-free gift? The Pension Protection Act provides that eligible IRA owners may obtain the tax advantages of making the charitable distributions if the payments are made directly from the IRA account itself. *You must instruct your IRA administrator to:* 1) make a direct distribution to the charity or organization of your choice as a charitable distribution (gift), 2) identify you as the IRA account owner/donor by name and address on its cover letter, and 3) send the distribution check to the address of the charity or nonprofit you have chosen. Ask if they have a form you must use to make this gift.

In closing, don't forget to remember to inform the charity or organization that you are making an IRA charitable distribution.

A close-up photograph of a man with a beard, wearing a dark shirt, looking down at an open Bible. The Bible is resting on a wooden surface, possibly a desk or table. The lighting is warm and focused on the man and the text of the Bible. The background is dark and out of focus.

Discerning the Will of God

By Ricky Kurth

The second in a series of four messages given this past summer at the 39th Annual Bible Conference of the Berean Bible Fellowship in Cedar Lake, Indiana

The first thing we need to remember in discerning the will of God is that God has *already* made His will perfectly clear in many areas. For instance, if you are wondering if it is God's will for you to steal, commit fornication, or marry an unbeliever, you can stop wondering! God has made His will crystal clear in these and many other areas in the pages of His written Word.

But when it comes to discerning God's will in areas *not* clearly addressed in Scripture, we must first recognize that God's will for us *as individuals* is only a part of His *overall* will for us *as Christians*, a subject we will consider in this present article. We begin with the words that Paul used to respond to a sacrificial financial gift contributed by the Macedonians:

“And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us BY THE WILL OF GOD” (II Cor. 8:5).

If you are saved, I can say to you unequivocally that it is the will of God that you *give yourself to the Lord*. Someday you will have to stand before Him at His Judgment Seat, where He will ask if you gave yourself to Him. This will be a haunting question indeed, coming from the One who will still bear the wounds of Calvary, where *He* gave Himself *for you*.

Of course, it is only fair to warn you that giving yourself to the Lord may lead to radical changes in your life! Paul tells us that the Macedonians first gave their own selves to the Lord, and then were willing to give of their finances “*beyond their power*” to give. Likewise, giving yourself to the Lord may result in revolutionary changes in *your* life!

Another verse that addresses God's overall will for our lives is found in Galatians 1:4 where, speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ, Paul says:

“Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, ACCORDING TO THE WILL OF GOD and our Father.”

If you are saved, it is the will of God that you be delivered from *“this present evil world.”* Notice Paul isn't talking about our deliverance from Hell. Praise God, we *are* delivered from Hell, but *that* evil world is not now *“present”* with us. Here Paul speaks of a life of deliverance from this *“present”* world. And so if you are living in sin, you are living out of the will of God. If you are wondering about God's will in other areas, you need to get this straight *first!*

Still another verse that addresses God's overall will for us is Ephesians 6:5,6:

“Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh...as the servants of Christ, DOING THE WILL OF GOD from the heart.”

Here Paul gives instructions to servants, but his words can be equally applied to employees in relation to their employers. Gentlemen, when you go to work you are *“doing the will of God.”* We sometimes hear Christian wives complain that their husbands work so much they don't have time for the things of God. While we would agree that God wants husbands involved in other areas of Christian service, it shouldn't be forgotten that a man's daily employment is a primary area of his Christian service. God has *commanded* that men work to provide for their families and support the Lord's work financially. And so men who *can* work and are *not* working are living out of the will of God.

In the context of Ephesians 6, we can also extrapolate and conclude that wives who submit to their husbands and children who obey their parents are *also* doing the will of God (Eph. 5:22-6:4). This admonition to children includes adolescents, who are just beginning to wonder about God's will for their lives. Young person, if you are seeking God's will for your life, you need to be obedient to God in this area *first!* If you are living in rebellion to your parents, you are out of the will of God.

Next, the overall will of God for our lives as Christians is surely the subject of I Thessalonians 4:3,4:

“For THIS IS THE WILL OF GOD, even your sanctification:

“That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour.”

The word *“sanctified”* means *set apart unto God as holy to Him.* Thus it is the will of God that you always use the *“vessel”* of your physical body in ways that *“honour”* the Lord. Do not fall for the world's lie that says, *“It's my body, and I'll do what I want with it.”* If you are saved, *“ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price.* Therefore glorify

God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (I Cor. 6:19,20). If you are using your body for fornication or other unholy purposes, you are out of the will of God.

The overall will of God is also unquestionably the subject of I Thesalonians 5:18:

"In every thing give thanks: for THIS IS THE WILL OF GOD IN CHRIST JESUS CONCERNING YOU."

It is the will of God that we be thankful Christians, even when it looks as if there is little for which to be thankful. The Apostle Paul exemplified this noble spirit when after enduring two weeks of stormy seas he gave thanks for a simple meal (Acts 27:33-35). Any protests we might raise to this instruction are hushed when we recall that even in the shadow of the cross, knowing the ordeal that awaited Him at Calvary, the Lord Jesus Christ also gave thanks (I Cor. 11:24).



Well, as you can see, God has an *overall will* for you as a Christian, and every Christian should want to obey God in all these areas. Often we pray, "Lord, I want to be in the *center* of your will." However, it should be remembered that the center of a dartboard is large enough to accommodate several darts.¹ Some are closer to *the center* of the center than others, but all are in the center of the target, and none are

worth more points than the others. In the same way, if you are a thankful, sanctified, faithful wife, child, or employee who has given yourself to the Lord, you *are* in the center of God's will! And within that center, there is plenty of room to make decisions in life that will put you in a different area of the center of God's will than other Christians, without losing any "points" with God, so to speak.

Perhaps the reader is thinking, "But how does this help me find God's will in areas such as where to live, who to marry, and which job to take?" To this we would reply, who is more likely to find God's will in these areas, a thankful, sanctified, faithful believer who has given himself to the Lord, or one who is *not* in the center of God's overall will?

Next, God not only has an overall will for you *as a believer*, He also has an overall will for you *as a member of the Body of Christ*, a will that was first made known to the Apostle Paul. Right after Paul was saved on the road to Damascus, Ananias said to him:

"...The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldst KNOW HIS WILL..." (Acts 22:14).

Imagine being told that of all the men on earth, God had chosen *you* to know His will! What a sacred privilege! And how precious it

is to read that the apostle did not keep the knowledge of God's will to himself, but shared it with *us*. Speaking of God the Father, we read,

“Having made known unto US the mystery of His will...” (Eph. 1:9).

Through the epistles of Paul, God has made known to us His overall will *for us as members of the Body of Christ*. And His overall will for us is different than His overall will for Israel. For instance, God's will for us is to be raptured to heaven (I Thes. 4:13-18), where we will reign with Christ *in the heavens* (I Cor. 6:3). But God's will for Israel is to reign with Christ in the kingdom of heaven *on earth* (Matt. 19:28). That's why the Lord taught them to pray, “Thy kingdom *come!*” (Matt. 6:10). *We* don't pray for the coming of the kingdom! If anything, we pray “Thy Church *go!*” Christians who don't rightly divide the Word don't know if they are coming or going!

“If you are wondering about God's will in other areas, you need to get this straight *first!*”

Does this help us decide questions like where to live, who to marry, and which job to take? Yes, for in his Thessalonian epistles, Paul makes it clear that we will be raptured *before* the “wrath”

of the Tribulation (I Thes. 1:10; 5:9), whereas the Lord taught His Hebrew followers they would have to go *through* the Tribulation to get to the kingdom. If you thought this latter was God's plan for *you*, you might choose to *live* up in the hills with your gun, your 4-wheel drive and a cache of food. You might also find a *job* that would allow you to live like this, and you would choose to *marry* a woman willing to go along with it all!

Thus it is not surprising to see the emphasis in Paul's epistles on knowing God's overall will for the Body of Christ. In Colossians 1:9, for instance, he told the Colossians:

“...we...do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.”

Notice Paul prays that we be filled with a knowledge of God's will “*in all wisdom.*” Is wisdom important in knowing the will of God? Solomon would say *yes!* As we know, when God appeared to Solomon in a dream and offered to give him anything he asked, he asked for *wisdom*, and received it (I Kings 3:5-14). What a difference this made in his life! *Before* receiving wisdom, we read:

“And Solomon loved the Lord...only he sacrificed and burnt incense in high places. And the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there; for that was the great high place: a thousand burnt-offerings did Solomon offer upon that altar” (I Kings 3:3,4).

The “high places” were places where the heathen worshipped *idols*, and so we know that before he received wisdom, Solomon worshipped the *right* God in the *wrong* way! If this sounds familiar, it is because Christianity is filled with people doing the same! They worship the right God in the wrong way, with robes, candles, incense and all the other trappings of religion. Even true believers worship the right God in wrong ways, ways that include water baptism, speaking in tongues, and a host of other Scriptural but dispensationally incorrect practices.

How did Solomon worship God *after* he was given a supernatural gift of wisdom? Just read what happened after he awoke from the dream in which he received his wisdom:

“And Solomon awoke; and, behold, it was a dream. And he came to Jerusalem, and stood before the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and offered up burnt-offerings...” (I Kings 3:15).

In other words, after receiving wisdom, Solomon worshipped the right God *in the right way!*

Now we see why Paul prayed that we would be filled with a knowledge of God’s will “*in all wisdom.*” Believers filled with this knowledge and the wisdom that comes with it will not be baptized, try to speak in tongues, or sacrifice their hard-earned dollars to the right God in the wrong places (ministries that do not teach the grace message).

One more thing about the wisdom of Solomon:

“When the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon...she came to prove him with hard questions...And Solomon told her all her questions...And when the queen of Sheba had seen all Solomon’s wisdom... she said to the king, It was a true report that I heard...of thy wisdom. Howbeit...the half was not told me...thy wisdom...exceedeth the fame which I heard” (I Kings 10:1-7).

Each week people write to us here at BBS with similar “hard questions,” questions they’ve asked other ministries in vain. Often we are able to answer them, not because we are so smart, but because we have “the knowledge of His will *in all wisdom!*” You see, the wisdom of God in the Bible is divided into the wisdom of His *Prophetic* program and the wisdom of His *Mystery* program. When people write to other ministries for wisdom, they only hear God’s Prophetic wisdom. Like the queen of Sheba, they are only told the half of God’s wisdom!

As we introduced the subject of discerning God’s will last month, we promised to also help you *understand* the will of God, in areas like “Why was I stricken with cancer?” “Why did the tornado hit my house, and not my neighbor’s?” And even, “Why did my child have to die?” Believers who ask these questions of other ministries, ministries that have only the prophetic half of God’s wisdom, are forced to suggest that perhaps in such cases God is *chastening* these believers for their sins.

There is no question that chastening is *Biblical*. God promised to bless Israel when she was good, but curse her if she was bad, with

drougths, famines, even allowing them to be conquered by their enemies (Lev. 26). Individuals in Israel were also chastened. Saul lost his kingdom (I Sam. 13:8-14). David lost his son (II Sam. 11:1-12:14).

So chastening is *Biblical*, but is it *dispensationally* Biblical? When you lose *your* child, are you being chastened of God? Questions like these can literally *haunt* a believer, and *must* be answered according to a knowledge of God's will in *all* of His wisdom.

This writer believes that physical chastening is inconsistent with the dispensation of grace. Today God is not blessing us when we are good, for we are already blessed with "*all*" spiritual blessings in Christ (Eph. 1:3). But to be consistent, we must also conclude that God is not cursing us when we are bad! If you fall into sin today, you needn't fear God will give you a disease tomorrow.

Some object from I Corinthians 11:30 that chastening is Pauline, but this reference is from one of Paul's *early* epistles, written before the withdrawal of many other transitional things, such as speaking in tongues and the other gifts described in the very next chapters of I Corinthians (12-14). If it is significant that there is no mention of these gifts in Paul's later epistles, and we believe that it *is* significant, then it must *also* be significant that there is no mention of physical chastening in Paul's later epistles.

Any physical chastening God might engage in *today* would be completely ineffectual, for the following reason: When Saul sinned, Samuel was there to make the connection between his sin and the loss of his kingdom. When David sinned, Nathan was there to connect his sin to the loss of his child. Without a spirit-filled man to make this connection, David may well have thought his child had died of natural causes. Even the Corinthians had the Apostle Paul to tell them there was a *reason* they were weak and sickly. However, today there are *no inspired prophets* who can link the hardships in your life to specific sins in your life, and you will drive yourself crazy speculating on such things.

That's why any physical chastening God might do *today* would be completely ineffectual. Imagine spanking your child often, but never telling him *why!* He would never learn right from wrong, for he couldn't know what specific action on his part brought the chastening!


Some might rightly ask, "*What son is he whom the father chasteneth not?*" (Heb. 12:7), but there is an answer to this question. Fathers do not physically chasten *adult* sons. If the reader is still spanking his adult son, there is something seriously wrong with your relationship with him! Adult sons are chastened with *words of correction*, and this is how God chastens His sons today. We have received "*the adoption of sons*" (Gal. 4:5), and are considered full-grown sons in God's sight. And so while "*the children of Israel*" were often chastened physically, today "*all Scripture is given...for correction*" (II Tim. 3:16). When we fall into

sin, we open the Word and it chastens us, or a mature Christian friend shares with us what God has to say about what we have done.

And so when the tornado hits your home, or you are stricken with cancer, or your child is taken in death, you don't have to wonder if you are being chastened of God. These things are just the result of living in a sin-cursed world.

How thrilling it is as a grace pastor to be able visit a brother in the hospital, and not have to suggest that perhaps he is being punished for his sins. A young couple in our church recently lost their precious one-year-old daughter, and we cannot imagine the heartbreak they endured. The last thing they needed was someone with only half an understanding of God's will suggesting that perhaps they themselves were to blame for their loss!

What a great message we have! How liberating it is! What a thrill it was to watch as those parents found, as millions before them had found, that *God's grace is sufficient* in even such times as this.

In our next issue, we will have more to say about understanding God's will in such areas. For now, isn't it wonderful to be able to simply rest in the love and grace of the Saviour! 

Endnote

1. Graphic: ©iStockphoto.com/Mark Evans



Spotlight on Grace Churches

This month's church is:

Kettle Moraine Bible Church

Location: 204 S. 7th Avenue, West Bend, Wisconsin 53095

Interim Senior Pastor: Edward Bedore

Associate Pastor Intern: Kevin Sadler

Services: 9:15 a.m. Sunday School

10:15 a.m. Worship Service

Additional Ministries: Saturday morning Bible study, Men's Breakfast, Ladies' midweek Bible study, Youth and Teen activities, College-age meetings, yearly Vacation Bible School, Milwaukee Rescue Mission trips, Seasonal activities and get-togethers.

Contact information: Pastor Ed Bedore (414) 313-0928; Associate Pastor Kevin Sadler (262) 305-6849; Church phone: (262) 338-2049.



BBS Letter Excerpts

From Minnesota:

“I have only recently discovered your website and learned about your organization. I have been blessed beyond measure. Grace is so wonderful! Thank you for having all of this wonderful literature available on your site.”

From Michigan:

“I attend a Grace church that teaches dispensationally! Now the Bible makes complete sense.”

From Indiana:

“Wow! Thank you, I definitely understand now! I was so excited that I grabbed my sister and explained it to her and she understands too.”

From Florida:

“When your books come in the mail, it is like eating sweet homemade apple pie, with fresh vanilla ice cream.” (Mystery ala-mode?—RK).

From the Internet:

“Yes, this e-mail has answered some questions I have held on to for quite some time now. These e-mails have definitely excited me in my time of study! I’m going to use them as an outline to study.”

From Minnesota:

“Thank you for your work and faithfulness in preaching the Word, rightly divided! It saved me from ‘quitting’ the Christian life, because the old way, legalism, wasn’t working anymore.”

From Indiana:

“I have learned more in the past 6 months—since I have found your website—than I have in the past 15 years since accepting the Lord as my personal savior! What little I have read is making sense to me, though I am new to this outlook. It definitely seems to open up a lot of doors that always seemed sealed shut!”

From California:

“I am beginning to understand rightly dividing the Word of truth. What a blessing *Things That Differ* has been in helping me understand. I’m still coming to terms with what I believe on some things. It is however making me also search the Scriptures to see if those things are so.” (And another Berean is born!—RK).

From Arkansas:

“We really do appreciate the content of the *Growing Up In Grace* Sunday School material and the quality of it. It is a great tool to help get the Word of God in the hearts of our children.”

From Florida:

“I want to testify that Pastor Stam’s book *Things That Differ* changed my life. The Mystery solved every apparent contradiction in the Bible that I struggled with for more than 15 years. I share the truth with great difficulty, due to the teachings that most Christians were convinced to believe through mainstream churches. I need your help!”

From Wisconsin:

“For both my wife and I, finding the *Berean Bible Society* so many years ago was a significant part in finding Christ and finally starting to understand the Bible.”

From Oklahoma:

“We were saved in a Southern Baptist church, then asked to leave because we went to another Baptist church for some evangelism classes. Being kicked out ended up being our best blessing because we found Les Feldick, a man in his class told us about the *Searchlight*, and as Paul Harvey says, ‘Now you know the rest of the story.’ That pastor told people that God had pruned bad fruit out of the congregation. Isn’t that sad!”

From Kansas:

“I marvel at your timely messages in the *Searchlight*. Then it dawned on me that anything about the Mystery is always timely and relevant in this age of Grace.” (Amen!—RK).

From Arizona:

“My husband and I are truly grateful for your ministry to us who were Scripturally blinded about Paul’s *mystery* gospel. About eight years ago, we were introduced to the importance of Paul’s gospel! As a result, as many have found, the right division between the Mystery and Prophecy has cleared many controversial questions that we had, particularly for me, since I am an ex-Seventh-day Adventist. I shared *Things That Differ* with an ex-SDA friend in Lebanon. She said: ‘the scales have been removed from my eyes!’ I also shared with her some *Searchlight* articles, specifically the series on Revelation by Pastor Sadler. She loved the study immensely!”

From Illinois:

“I’ve always believed in God, and that Jesus died for my sins. But I’ve also always believed I continued to sin, no matter how good I tried to be. So I was never really sure if I would go to Heaven. I met a special guy who explained everything, the Mystery of Grace, rightly dividing the Word...it was the most amazing conversation I ever had! It made SO much sense. I KNEW now I would go to Heaven. I understood. I cried tears of joy!”

From the Internet:

“Thank you for the *Two Minutes* e-mails. Today’s devotional really stood out, as I am prone to worry what other people think of my appearance. Now I know how not to, and to know that God accepts me, warts and all... Thanks for such reassurance.”

From California:

“This *Two Minutes* devotional gets my award for the best of the year. Maybe the last two years. I love word studies.”

From Arizona:

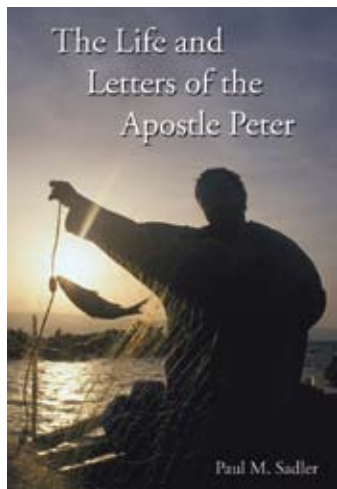
“We are enclosing our monthly contribution, and you’ll notice it is only half our usual amount. We have had some major changes in our income and need to make a few adjustments. Our assembly here is going through some financial constraints right now, and we need to support them as much as we can.” (We recommend supporting your local church first.—RK).

From Illinois:

“I’m sending you another gift for your service, as I don’t have any place around here to go to a Grace church, and I feel like I ought to give to help out.”

“These [Bereans] were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so.” —Acts 17:11

Studying the Hebrew Epistles Rightly Divided!



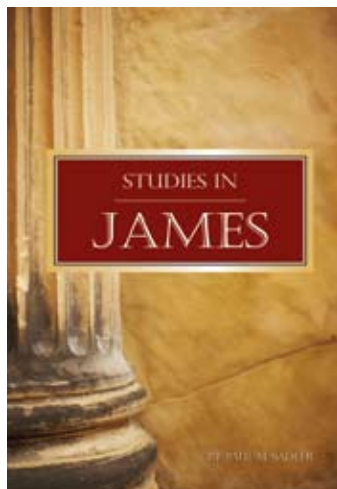
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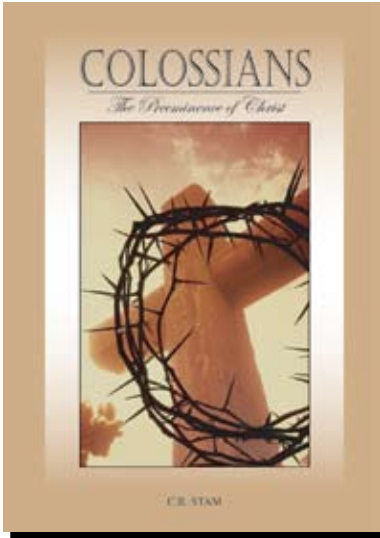
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NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Berean Bible Institute Missions Conference: Grace believers who attended BBI's first missions conference last year will tell you that this is one conference you don't want to miss! Mark your calendar for January 18th and 19th, and contact BBI for further information: *Berean Bible Institute*, 116 S. Kettle Moraine Drive, P.O. Box 587, Slinger, WI 53086...262-644-5504...bbi@bereanbibleinstitute.org.

Berean Bible Institute Dean of Students Dan Wolgast has accepted the position of interim pastor at *Falls Bible Church* in Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin. Milwaukee-area Grace believers looking for a church are invited to learn more about the ministry of this historic Grace church at www.fallsbiblechurch.org.

Berean Church of Denver is looking for you! If you live in the North Denver Metro area, and are looking for a church home, our good friend Pastor Bennett Boothe would like to extend a warm welcome to you and your family. For more information, you can get in touch with Bennett at bennettboothe@qwest.net, or at 303-452-9148.

Pastoral Opportunity: If you have a desire to serve the Lord in the pastorate, *Grace Bible Church* in Madison, Wisconsin would like to speak with you. For additional information, contact GBC Board President Robert Vandervort at rcvand1@charter.net, or at 5477 Westshire Circle, Apt. 223, Waunakee, WI 53507.

New Bible Study: The *Berean Grace Fellowship* meets Sunday mornings in the home of our friend William Schaeffer, 314 Valley View Road, Myerstown, PA 17067. Sunday School starts at 9:30, then Brother Carl Kline teaches the adults at 10:30. BGF is also already planning a Bible conference at the Kenbrook Bible Camp (www.kenbrook.org) featuring Pastor Ricky Kurth, so mark your calendars for April 25-27, and contact Bill Schaeffer for further information: 717-949-3020.

Clarification: In September's *Question Box* we stated that "it was God who initially determined to prompt David to number Israel." Since *Satan* is always the author of sin, we should have specified that God "moved David against them" by *allowing* the adversary to prompt David to number Israel (II Sam. 24:1). We regret any confusion our words may have caused.

*Our cover lighthouse photo was taken by James Raine and sent to us by Richard Raine, both of Lady Lake, Florida. The *Ponce de Leon Inlet Lighthouse* is located in Ponce Inlet, FL. At 175 feet tall, it is the tallest lighthouse in Florida and among the tallest in the country.

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and it is one that the poorest of us can make and be not
poorer but richer for having made it.” —A. W. Tozer

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